United Nations A/71/1039–S/2017/711

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
12 September 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 126 (h)
Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 9 August 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the joint statement adopted by the participants in the ninth general meeting between the United Nations system and the Caribbean Community and its associated institutions, which was held at United Nations Headquarters on 20 and 21 July 2017 (see annex).*

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 126 (h), and of the Security Council, in response to resolutions 1631 (2005) and 2033 (2012).

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

* The annex is being circulated in the language of submission only.

17-14387 (E) 120917

Please recycle

Annex

Joint statement of the ninth general meeting between the United Nations system and the Caribbean Community and its associated institutions

20 and 21 July 2017, New York

1. The Ninth General Meeting between the United Nations (UN) system and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and its associated institutions was held at the UN Headquarters in New York on 20 and 21 July 2017. The UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and the Secretary-General of CARICOM, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, addressed the participants. The meeting — which enjoyed wide participation of representatives of the CARICOM Secretariat and its associated institutions and of the UN system — was co-chaired by Ambassador Colin Granderson, Assistant Secretary-General, Foreign and Community Relations of the CARICOM Secretariat, and Ms. Martha Doggett, Director, a.i. of the Americas Division of the UN Department of Political Affairs. Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Granderson delivered closing remarks.

2. The UN Secretary-General congratulated CARICOM on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the General Assembly session during which it was granted observer status at the UN and thanked CARICOM Member States for their leadership on pressing global issues, such as climate change and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). He underlined that the UN system stood ready to help prevent and mitigate the effects of climate change, a global threat and a hurdle for sustainable development which affects, in particular, the most vulnerable countries such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including low-lying coastal States. He commended the progress of regional integration in the Caribbean and welcomed the meeting as a means to increase bilateral cooperation between CARICOM and the UN. The UN Secretary-General thanked the Caribbean region for its strong commitment to multilateral diplomacy and expressed his gratitude for CARICOM's longstanding role as an advocate for Haiti. He praised the contributions to the UN by CARICOM nationals who figure prominently among his senior advisers and the UN leadership in general, while calling for CARICOM and the UN to stand together in defense of the rights and well-being of future generations.

3. The Secretary-General of CARICOM expressed the Caribbean Community's appreciation for the support rendered by the UN System to the integration movement and the development of its Member States. He reiterated the Region's commitment to the UN "as a principal forum for multilateral cooperation and a platform from which small States can be seen and heard." He outlined some of the major challenges faced by CARICOM, including the adverse effects of climate change, graduation from concessional development financing based on GDP per capita and not taking into account the inherent vulnerability of SIDS, crime and violence, the illicit trade in drugs and small arms, the threat of terrorism and extreme violence, the blacklisting of CARICOM Member States as non-cooperative tax jurisdictions despite their compliance with the relevant OECD regimens, the withdrawal of correspondent banking relations, and the high economic cost of addressing NCDs. With regard to NCDs, Secretary-General LaRocque welcomed ECOSOC's most recent resolution on their prevention and control, which, inter alia, called for greater financing to facilitate the work of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force. He, also, noted the opportunity provided by the Ninth General Meeting to examine the impact of global changes and developments of significance to SIDS

and to strengthen cooperation between CARICOM and the UN system in relation to those developments.

4. An update was provided on the Caribbean Community, highlighting the links between the Community's four (4) pillars — economic integration, foreign policy coordination, human and social development and security — and the implementation of the Community's first Strategic Plan 2015-2019. The Meeting was also informed of the outcome of the review of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), which highlighted the significant progress made but also the challenges involved in completing implementation. Note was taken of recent decisions of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community further strengthening the integration arrangements and charting the way forward toward making the CSME more effective.

5. As part of the review of the implementation of decisions adopted in the previous General Meeting, the Meeting was informed of progress made in various areas of strategic intervention and received a briefing on the main activities undertaken via the UN Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (MSDF), which has been signed by fourteen (14) CARICOM Member States and twenty (20) UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes. Taking into account that the UN MSDF and CARICOM Strategic Plan 2015-2019 are fully aligned and complementary, the UNDS proposed to use the UN MSDF as the Strategic Framework for collaboration with the UN system, which was welcomed by the CARICOM Secretariat. Thus, CARICOM will continue to engage with the UN system in the Caribbean through the MSDF Annual Coordination Meeting to enhance collaboration and for better and faster results toward the SDGs in the Caribbean region. Also, the UN system will engage with CARICOM and its institutions to build initiatives addressing identified needs and gaps, while ensuring complementarity that may be identified by the MDSF Virtual Policy Networks. This does not preclude the existing MOUs with specific UN Entities. UN Agencies will continue to engage in specific areas of sectoral expertise with CARICOM. The CARICOM side expressed its appreciation to the UN for its support. A brief overview of current changes and developments in the international and hemispheric political and economic environment and their geopolitical and geo-economic implications for the Caribbean Community was presented.

6. The action framework that the UN has adopted regarding SIDS, with particular reference to the SAMOA Pathway, was presented. Participants highlighted the challenges that Caribbean States face in the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda as well as the goals of the SAMOA Pathway. The aim of the Caribbean Community in achieving a high level of congruity between the developments at the international level on SIDS with its regional strategic plan and the international sustainable development agenda was noted. CARICOM stressed the urgency to take action, mobilize resources, strengthen cooperation and undertake activities needed to achieve the SDG and SAMOA targets. Additionally, the economic and social burden on the region from the epidemics of CHIKV and Zika and the gap in regional health security was noted.

7. The Meeting also focused on the strong linkages between the development of Caribbean States and the environment. The role that the CARICOM Secretariat and the UN system could play in supporting Member States' participation in both regional and global multilateral environment agreements was highlighted. CARICOM's impending engagement in a series of national, subregional and regional consultations on the proposed Community Environment and Natural Resources Policy Framework and First Action Plan was underlined and discussion on these engagements with UN stakeholders was invited.

8. The Meeting also received a report on the energy situation in CARICOM Member States, which depend heavily on fossil fuels and which face technical, environmental and socioeconomic obstacles to improving energy efficiency. Participants were updated on CARICOM's Energy Policy, and the Caribbean Sustainable Energy Roadmap and Strategy (C-SERMS). The Meeting recognized the critical role of energy within the sustainable development agenda of CARICOM SIDS, along with key issues faced by CARICOM in integrating variable renewals and resilience into energy planning and in incorporating energy at the center of development planning. CARICOM pointed out that a sustainable energy architecture, if suitably designed, could play a significant role in empowering Member States with an ability to implement some of the measures that are necessary for adapting to climate change and sea-level rise. It could also support other critical interventions, which are necessary for Member States' sustainable development and resilience building. The General Meeting noted the positive steps made within the Caribbean Community, inclusive of the establishment of the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CREEE), thanks in part to the critical support of international partners.

9. Recognizing that the impacts of climate change will be felt most strongly by SIDS, CARICOM sought support for adaptation and mitigation measures and in implementing national action plants as well meeting commitments under the COP Paris Agreement. Adverse effects include more extreme climate events occurring with more intensity, frequency and unpredictability. The importance of community-level preparedness was highlighted, given the differential impacts of recent hurricanes in the region. The UN recognized the capacity of CARICOM through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and offered support to strengthen partnerships for joint risk assessment, mobilization of disaster experts and resource mobilization.

10. Additionally, the Meeting noted the multi-dimensional challenges of financing for development. These included the lack of economic resilience and of access to concessional multilateral financing and a worsening of the external public debt situation resulting from a constrained fiscal capacity. Several initiatives were being pursued by CARICOM States toward the achievement of fiscal and debt sustainability, such as a fiscal responsibility framework for the Caribbean Community and an ECLAC initiative on debt for climate change adaptation and debt reduction. The Meeting was also informed of external challenges which exacerbate inherent vulnerabilities. These included the decrease in correspondent banking relations — which disrupted international payments and capital inflows — and the high cost of compliance with the OECD-driven international tax agenda.

11. CARICOM emphasized the need to advance measures to develop sustainable ocean-based economies in the Caribbean and the importance of technical assistance and investments in unlocking the potential of oceans and seas for food security, employment and the economic development of Caribbean countries, especially in the context of SDG 14 — "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development" — and of the outcomes of the UN Oceans Conference held in June 2017. CARICOM also highlighted the ongoing work on the development of a legally binding international instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) was spotlighted as a model for protection and sustainable development of marine resources.

12. The important relationship between fisheries and the environment was underscored. In recognition of the blue-growth concept, which focuses on generating economic growth from oceans and seas, CARICOM sought to expand

and sustain the productive potential of fisheries and aquaculture, while developing new opportunities for trade in marine products and improving the resilience of coastal communities. It was posited that although marine conservation and fisheries were treated as separate issues, they were part of the same system. A call was made by CARICOM, therefore, for closer collaboration between the agencies involved in the maritime environment and those involved in fisheries, as well as for continued technical support from the UN system to develop and implement fisheries management plans, strengthen data collection and statistics for evidence-based decision-making, and build human resources in fisheries and oceans management.

13. A presentation was made on CARICOM's Human Resource Development Strategy, which will focus on the development of technical and personal skills to address the workplace, the future of jobs and active citizenship. It was recognized that the opportunities for lifelong learning and certification presented through the proposed seamless system would be crucial in addressing wastage and the current high stratification of outcomes. The importance of an inter-sectoral approach and partnerships at all levels in ensuring successful implementation of the Strategy was stressed.

14. Furthermore, linkages were drawn between the CARICOM's HRD Strategy and the framework for the implementation of SDG 4: "Ensure inclusive and quality for all and promote lifelong learning" on education. It was stressed that, as a basic human right, as a transformational force for poverty eradication, as an engine for sustainability, and as a force for dialogue and peace, education is a fundamental enabler for the enjoyment of other rights. Implementing evidence-based education policies is in fact a key strategy to address all development challenges and uphold the 2030 Agenda.

15. Prioritizing early-childhood development and addressing the need for reform and expansion of higher education were exemplified as commitments to lifelong learning in the region. In order to improve learning outcomes, tackle disparities, prevent dropouts, secure completion of secondary education and increase completion of tertiary education, participants underscored the need to generate tangible outcomes in relation to SDG 4, such as: tying education with employment; moving towards a technology and gender-inclusive approach; developing vocational training based on requirements needed to go into the workforce and ultimately building a culture of human rights.

16. Participants drew attention to the linkages between health and nutrition security, particularly with respect to the child population and underscored the value of the ongoing collaborative work between CARICOM and the UN in securing Food and Nutrition Security with emphasis on reducing the food-import bill through increased food production and trade, wider application of Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS), supporting the Regional NCD Strategy and implementation of effective Agricultural Health and Food Safety Systems. The Meeting was advised of decisions of CARICOM Heads of Government supporting action in these areas and the importance of the Region realizing the potential for the contribution of agriculture. CARICOM expressed its appreciation particularly to the FAO for its ongoing contribution to the Region's agriculture sector.

17. Participants assessed youth development as an accelerating factor for national and regional development, paying attention to the outcomes of CARICOM's Youth Development Action Plan. The benefits of systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective, including a gender perspective in development frameworks, were underscored. Participants agreed on the need to foster the use and collection of data and application of gender-analysis tools such as the CARICOM Gender Equality Indicators as a means to support and amplify Governments' capacity to achieve

gender equality and monitor and assess its SDG implementation. Participants welcomed the decision of the CARICOM Heads of Government during the 28th Inter-sessional Meeting celebrated in February of 2017 in Guyana to endorse the "Every Caribbean Women, Every Caribbean Child Initiative" and to take actions to address women's, girls', children's and adolescent's health. Attention was drawn to the fact that gender equality, including the prevention of gender-based violence and adolescent pregnancy, as well as combating NCDs and HIV requires a multi-sectoral approach that relies on the availability of sex-disaggregated data as a minimum requirement in all monitoring frameworks.

18. UN participants praised CARICOM's leadership in raising global awareness of NCDs. Cooperation options between the UN and CARICOM to improve Caribbean States' health systems were explored, including sexual reproductive health and "Fast Tracking" the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, under a convening role of CARICOM/PANCAP.

19. The regional challenges regarding transnational organized crime and citizen security were discussed. CARICOM highlighted its concerns regarding the escalating crime and violence in the region and their deleterious impact on society and the need for support for interventions to eradicate this scourge. Participants agreed on the need to maintain a comprehensive approach to security issues.

20. Responding to the priorities emphasized by CARICOM, the UN also stood ready to continue to support the Caribbean region in strengthening the approach to citizen security through tackling key areas of concern, including criminal intelligence and the control of small arms and light weapons, as well as the strengthening of capacities at both the national and regional levels for statistics. UNODC applauded the work of the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) in the development and drafting of the Caribbean Agreement for the Return and Sharing of Recovered Assets and pledged to continue to support the development, adoption and subsequently the implementation of the Agreement in the region. As the Caribbean region, led by IMPACS, seeks to strengthen its capacity to prevent, combat and prosecute terrorism through the development of a Caribbean Counter Terrorism Strategy — currently under development — the UN System aimed to support the implementation of the Strategy through the focus on region-wide strengthening of the legal counter terrorism framework, at both the national and regional levels, in line with UN Security Council resolutions.

21. An overview was provided of the University of the West Indies (UWI)'s 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, which is focused on expansion of access to tertiary education, alignment of industry and academia for wealth creation and economic growth, and UWI's agility to respond to global opportunities. In highlighting the UWI's current thematic research areas, synergies with the MSDF in the Caribbean, the SDGs and CARICOM development goals were identified, with the UWI pledging to increase UN access to its research and graduate talent.

22. Participants agreed that the Ninth UN-CARICOM General Meeting achieved its goals of strengthening the existing partnership between the two organizations and identifying ways to maximize progress in the priority areas of cooperation. The Tenth UN-CARICOM General Meeting is expected to take place at the CARICOM Headquarters in Georgetown, Guyana, in 2019.

New York, 21 July 2017